DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 453 138 SO 032 799

AUTHOR	Iram, Yaacov
TITLE	Culture of Peace: The Israeli Palestinian Case.
PUB DATE	2001-03-00
NOTE	13p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Comparative and International Education Society (45th, Washington, DC, March 14-17, 2001).
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Conflict Resolution; *Cultural Context; *Cultural Pluralism; Foreign Countries; Geographic Regions; *Peace; *Program Evaluation; Student Attitudes
IDENTIFIERS	Israel; *Palestinian Israeli Conflict; *Peace Education

ABSTRACT

The United Nations has declared the year 2000 "The Year for the Culture of Peace." A "culture of peace" implies more than a passive and quiescent state due to an absence of war and violence. To attain a culture of peace, people must actively strive toward positive values which enable different cultures and nations to coexist harmoniously. These values are based on fostering knowledge between peoples, which leads to acceptance of pluralism based on understanding of both shared and unique aspects of different peoples and cultures. Within the Israeli context this entails striving toward fruitful coexistence between Jews and Arabs, Israelis and Palestinians, as well as between people from different socioeconomic strata and political-ideological convictions. The aim of this paper is to present, analyze, and evaluate a unique program which aims at imparting the values of multiculturalism and peace, transcending religious and political boundaries, and bridging cultural, ethnic, and occasional differences. The program conducts workshops currently and curricular materials will be eventually introduced in the Israeli and Palestinian school systems. The qualitative assessment of the 12 groups of students that participated in the workshops during the last 2 years confirmed that it was a meaningful experience. (Author/BT)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 453 138

Culture of Peace

The Israeli Palestinian Case

Professor Yaacov Iram

The Josef Burg Chair in Education for Human Values, Tolerance and Peace

UNESCO Chair on Human Rights, Democracy, Peace, Tolerance & International Understanding

Bar Ilan University, Israel

SO 032 799

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Yaacov Iram

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Paper presented at the Comparative and International Education Society 45-th Annual Conference, Washington, D.C. March 2001

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Yaacov Iram
UNESCO/Burg Chair in
Education for Human Values
Tolerance and Peace
Bar Ilan University, Israel

Culture of Peace: The Israeli Palestinian Case

Abstract

The United Nations have declared the year 2000 as "The Year for the Culture of Peace". A "culture of peace" implies more than a passive and quiescent state due to an absence of war and violence. To attain a "culture of peace", one must actively strive toward positive values which enable different cultures and nations to harmoniously coexist. These values are based on fostering knowledge between peoples, which leads to acceptance of pluralism based on understanding of both shared and unique aspects of different peoples and cultures. Within the Israeli context this entails striving towards fruitful coexistence between Jews and Arabs, Israelis and Palestinians, as well as between people from different socioeconomic strata and political – ideological convictions.

The aim of this paper is to present, analyze and evaluate a unique program which aims at imparting the values of multiculturalism and peace, transcending religious and political boundaries and bridge cultural, ethnic and national differences.

2000: The Year for the Culture of Peace

The United Nations have declared the year 2000 as "The Year for the Culture of Peace," and the years 2001-2010 as the "International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World." A "culture of peace" implies more than a passive and quiescent state due to an absence of war and violence. To attain a culture of peace, one must actively strive toward positive values which enable different cultures and nations to harmoniously coexist. These values are based on helping the underprivileged, sharing knowledge, and fostering tolerance between peoples. Tolerance, which leads to the establishment of a pluralistic society, requires an understanding of both the shared and unique aspects of different peoples and cultures.

We live in an age saturated with advances in information technology and telecommunications. In this turbulent era of change, people rediscover the need for regional identity as well as the need for values. Stable values provide security in a continually changing world. The dignity of the individual represents a basic value, which serves as a stepping-stone to other values: freedom of speech, freedom from suffering, and tolerance, which is a prerequisite to attaining an enduring peace. Education plays a paramount role in imparting the values of tolerance, multiculturalism and peace to the next generation. Through tolerance, one can strive to transcend religious and political boundaries, and bridge cultural and ethnic differences. Tolerance and pluralism require both knowledge of what people share in common, as well as understanding of their differences. Without this awareness, there can be no multicultural education.

Challenges Facing Israel

The challenges which face the State of Israel comprise the most vital issues confronting all democratic societies around the world: living at peace with one's neighbors, learning to tolerate and understand fundamental cultural differences within a pluralistic society, creating an environment in which basic human values are shared and upheld, and replacing conflicts between cultures with dialogue of cultures. Within the Israeli context, this entails the economic, social and cultural integration of more than half a million *olim* (new immigrants) from the former Soviet Union and Ethiopia in particular. It also involves striving towards fruitful coexistence between religious and non-religious Jews, between people from different socioeconomic strata and political convictions, between Israeli Arabs and Palestinians, as well as setting the foundations of peace between Israel and the Palestinians/other Arab states.

The Josef Burg Chair: Educating for Tolerance and Peace in Israel

The Josef Burg Chair in Education for Human Values, Tolerance and Peace was founded in 1995 at Bar-Ilan University in Israel. The Chair aims to cultivate awareness of multiculturalism, pluralism and tolerance in general, with a particular focus on Israeli society. The mission of the Chair is to provide educators with research, insight, and the practical guidance they need in order to give a meaningful future to the historic process of change and renewal that is taking place in Israel and throughout the globe today.

The Chair addresses the need for peaceful coexistence within three circles of Israeli society:

1. Jewish society
2. Jews and Arabs
3. Israeli-Palestinian conflict

Israel's Jewish society is in itself largely heterogeneous. It is comprised of new immigrants and veteran Israelis, religious and secular Jews, and Jews of left and right political orientation. The gaps created by such diverse strands of the population are socioeconomic, cultural and ethnic.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, being part of the larger Israel-Arab conflict, has a history that spans centuries. Since the conflict revolves around basic political, religious and cultural values, it has engendered a great degree of mutual distrust, fear and suspicion. Both sides have developed deeply-rooted stereotypes and prejudices that are difficult to weed out. The signing of the Oslo Peace Accords by the Palestinian Authority and Government of Israel marked merely the beginning of a lengthy and arduous road leading towards the resolution of a conflict that has plagued the Middle East region for generations.

Although it is the political leaders who sign peace treaties, it is the duty of educators to convey the importance of peace to their students, who embody the future generation. The long-term success of the difficult and fragile peace process, now underway in our region, is dependent in part on the education of our youth. It requires new philosophical, sociological, and psychological conceptualizations.

Activities of the Josef Burg Chair in Education

The Chair develops a variety of ways of implementing conflict resolution, based on democratic values of peace and tolerance. The Chair provides educators with research, insight and practical guidance in issues ranging from peace, mutual understanding, and tolerance to absorption of new immigrants, in order to build a strong, healthy and democratic society.

The Chair is responsible for organizing and conducting a wide range of activities:

- Facilitating exchanges between Israeli and international academics through conferences and cooperating with international institutions
- Initiating and supporting research
- Producing and publishing educational and instructional materials for all educational levels
- Conducting tolerance workshops within the School of Education's teacher-training department
- Establishing a data center for research to serve academics and educators in Israel and throughout the world

In order to achieve an environment of peace and tolerance in the Middle East, there is a need to promote inter-religious discussion among the world's largest three monotheistic religions: Jews, Christians, and Muslims. Increased interaction between both Israeli and Palestinian peoples is a prerequisite to establishing an enduring, just and secure peace. Part of this interaction involves rooting out stereotypes and prejudices which both sides continue to harbor. Educators from both sides meet to discuss the idea of becoming *agents of change* in their respective societies, in order to promote mutual understanding and trust. As part of the training program of *agents of change*, joint education for tolerance workshops are conducted for faculty members and students of Bar-Ilan and Al-Quds Universities. These workshops enable participants to become familiar with the unique culture of the other side, to become aware of their overt and latent stereotypes, and acquire the attitude and means to cope with prejudice effectively.

Thus, enhancing mutual understanding between Palestinians and Israelis.

Education Towards a "Culture of Peace" - Democracy and Tolerance Program

A "Culture of Peace" is expected to stress social relationships and interactions between individuals and groups that reflect such qualities as mutual respect, cooperation, tolerance, and encouraging diversity.

We will conclude this paper by introducing a specific program which was adapted to teach "a world of difference" in the Israeli society in the wake of heightened political-ideological tension. The program was introduced to pre-service, prospective teachers to train them in awareness of stereotypes and to cope with prejudice towards individuals and groups by modifying conceptual and attitudinal biases.

The "Education Towards Democracy and Tolerance" workshops conducted at Bar-Ilan University, are the only university-sponsored workshops of their kind in Israel. These workshops are an adoption of ADL' s "A World of Difference" (AWOD) Program. The focus of these workshops are stereotypes and biases.

The university framework brings with it a number of advantages: the workshops are under academic supervision; were prepared mainly by faculty members experts in educational theory and technique; and can be scientifically monitored as to their effectiveness, both in the immediate and long-term perspectives. A central part of the workshops, from the university's point of view, is the monitoring and evaluation of *implementation and effectiveness* of the learned materials and exercises in the classroom by teachers who participated in the workshops.

It is important to underline the defining principles of the academic Democracy and Tolerance Workshops, as it eventually emerged at Bar-Ilan University. The primary purpose of the workshops, as it developed, was to examine the principles of democracy and tolerance; and, secondarily, to examine how these mesh with Jewish traditional teachings. The workshops

not only conducted activity sessions and encouraged introspection as a teaching technique, but also incorporated theoretical study of educational approaches and `value orientations' to tolerance, group discussion based on selected reading materials, as well as qualitative and quantitative assessment. The incorporation of Jewish cultural and Jewish religious elements, and in certain workshops also Christian and Muslim religious values in the curricular materials in the workshops adds a unique `value' orientation to the new program -- an orientation that is usually absent in other educational exercises of this nature. Discussions involving reactions to stereotypes (such as attitudes towards sexual preference), for example, included consideration of viewpoints in Jewish tradition on this matter. This, in addition to the consideration of personal reactions to the stereotype, as the AWOD Program would suggest. The Bar-Ilan workshops add special dimensions to the program; dimensions that will prove central in successfully insinuating the curriculum in Israeli schools, especially the traditional.

The new product, a pilot curriculum, is a blend of prejudice-reduction introspection exercises and techniques developed by ADL' s AWOD, with a theoretical base of educational approaches to `value orientations' and tolerance, and an approach to traditional Jewish viewpoints on these issues, as well as Christian and Muslim attitudes, introduced by non Jewish students of the workshops.

The student population in these workshops represent the multicultural, multiethnic and the socioeconomic fabric of the Israeli society: Jews and Arabs, religious and secular, Easterners and Westerners, veterans and newcomers, in particular, recent immigrants from the former Soviet Union Republics and from Ethiopia.

The Session Course Curriculum

The following is a brief description of the session topics in the workshops.

First Meeting: Personal Identity and Perception Adjustment

Activities included filling out a standard questionnaire, name game exercise, revealing associations about stereotypes, expectations and adjustment of expectations, summary -- defining the goals of the course, its structure and work methodology. Filling out an attitude questionnaire.

Second Meeting: The Components of Personal Identity

Personal identity and its outgrowing stereotypes: Activities included a "getting acquainted" exercise". Establishing identity -- "where do I belong?" Summary -- discussion on the meaning of belonging to a group and relation to "out-group", and biases.

Third Meeting: Stereotypic Thinking

Stereotypes as vehicle to personal and group communication activities. Theoretical study of stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination.

Fourth Meeting: Examination of the Tendency of having Biases

Activities included, identifying areas of biases and their expression

Fifth Meeting: Positive and Negative Aspects of Different Group Identities

Activities included "walking in the shoes of an observant/secular person". Theoretical discussion about the findings of studies conducted in the past on the subject of observant/secular interactions.

A theoretical and research-oriented component discussion about the relationship between specific groups and implemented teachers' actual experiences in their classrooms.

Sixth Meeting: Developing a Common Language

In this session participants in the workshops are expected to reveal their own biases/stereotypes.

Seventh Meeting: Communication as an Aid or Deterrent for Tolerance
Activities included - components of discussion and argument, agreeing and disagreeing -- analysis of selective listening techniques and perceptions of argumentation.

Eighth Meeting: External Perception of Other Cultures: Recognizing the "Other"
The major activity is an exercise, in Relativism vs. Absolutism.

Cooperation with Palestinian Faculty and Students

The Chair received in 1997/8 – 99/2000 a grant from the US Embassy – Regional Professional and Technical Cooperation Program, to conduct workshops on education for human values, tolerance and peace with the Palestinian Al-Quds University. Faculty and students from both universities participate in these workshops to explore modes of cultural attitudes of Israelis and Palestinians as individuals and as members of their respective groups – in order to promote mutual understanding.

Similar workshops were planned to be introduced in Palestinian educational institutes . Since 1998 meetings between faculty members of the Chair and Al-Quds University took place. In these meetings the two teams discussed the nature of the workshops and further cooperation was planned. Joint Seminars for Israeli – Palestinian students took place in 2000. The language in these meetings were Hebrew, Arabic and English.

Curricular materials are developed and will eventually be introduced in the Israeli and Palestinian school systems. These curricula are designed for the Israeli and Palestinian facilitators of the workshops. Other curricula materials is planned to be developed and distributed in Israeli and Palestinian High Schools.

Qualitative and Quantitative Assessments

The qualitative assessment (portfolio and feedback activities) of the twelve groups of students that participated during the last two years in these workshops confirmed that it was a meaningful experience for its participants. The students report that it was a personal experience and social contribution. During feedback sessions and in their summary papers (portfolio), students report that they have learned to identify their personal patterns of thought which is in a categorical form when applied to certain groups (bias). Statements such as: "I have learnt that when I encounter a person wearing a skullcap (*kippa*) I don't give him and myself a chance to get acquainted or to get to know each other, and that leaves me with a feeling of deprivation".

The participants in these workshops report also on its social contribution. About eighty percent of the participants report that they were gratified by the opportunity of the workshop to get to know more intimately, groups of people that they have never had a chance to communicate with.

Typical statements such as: "the workshop provided an opportunity to meet people from different walks of life which I would not dare to talk to before", were expressed frequently. These statements applied to different segments within the Jewish student population such as: religious - non-religious; less so but still in existence - easterners (Sephardic) and westerners (Ashkenazi) veterans and newcomers (immigrants from the former Soviet Union Republics and more so toward Ethiopian immigrants); Jews and Arab Israelis; Israelis and Palestinians.

Following our quantitative and qualitative studies and based on its findings we are planning to conduct an intercultural study of attitudes of American, Israeli, German and Palestinian students in teacher pre-service training programs toward cultural differences.

The Chair's overall aim is to help a new generation build a tolerant society by respecting the rights of individuals and groups, and thus contributing to the greater good. The future of Israel, and for that matter, the future of all democratic societies, will be determined by the ability of the next generation to internalize an informed understanding of the meaning of human values, tolerance and peace, as well as geopolitical and intercultural coexistence. The experience and findings generated by this project may benefit both the Israeli and Palestinian societies, as well as societies throughout the world, in coping with animosity resulting from diversity.